

Salt River Fire Department Operating Guidelines

Public Information Officer

April 2000

201.04B

1 of 3



INTRODUCTION

It is the policy of the Salt River Fire Department to establish and maintain a positive operating relationship with the news media.

This directive will establish a Standard Operating Procedure to provide the news media with information normally requested from the Salt River Fire Department on fire, EMS, and hazardous materials incidents, to control the movements of media personnel for safety reasons, and to establish an operating framework for Public Information that will effectively integrate into the overall fireground management system.

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE

Command will be responsible for the management of public information on the fireground. As soon as practical, after basic rescue and fire operations are extended, Command will establish a Public Information Officer. The effective establishment of this position will relieve Command of the need to deal directly with the media during critical command stages and will provide the standard information the media will require to accurately report the situation.

The Public Information Officer will report to Command, upon his/her arrival on the fireground, to determine the status of the Public Information position.

Prior to the establishment of Public Information Officer, members of the media should be encouraged to "stage" at a central point, outside the barrier tape, so the transfer of information will be seamless and consistent.

Prior to the arrival of the Public Information Officer, Command may assign an officer or company to the Information Officer. The assigned officer will begin to gather information on the incident. The Public Information Officer should station himself/herself in a readily visible and accessible location adjacent to the Command Post to meet and provide information for media personnel.

Radio designation will be "PIO."

Individuals assigned to perform Public Information Officer functions should consider the following general guidelines:

- If possible, add anything to the basic information on the form that will enhance the story of the situation; such information might include:
 - A. An extremely hazardous situation.

Salt River Fire Department Operating Guidelines

Public Information Officer

April 2000

201.04B

2 of 3



B. A rescue.

C. A person or company that did an outstanding job.

- The extra information will make a better story for the reporters and tell the citizens how the Fire Department provides fire, EMS, or hazard control services.
- If possible, a personal interview with the Fire Officer or crewmember is encouraged.
- Don't be afraid to talk to reporters. They will report the facts as you give them. Tell them everything you can, but make sure everything you tell them is correct.

Usually, during the time you are gathering information, you will have inquiries from reporters seeking information. Give them what you have at that point and emphasize that this information is tentative. If it gets to the point that questions from reporters are keeping you from gathering information, use these alternatives:

1. Tell the reporters to gather in one place and that you will return shortly with more information.
2. Request additional manpower from Command for assistance in gathering information and to stay with the reporters.
3. Tell the reporters to go ahead and get pictures and film footage without interfering with fireground operations, while you are gathering information. Make sure and point out the hazard zone. Arrange to meet them shortly at a location and give them the facts.
4. If they have deadlines to meet, get a phone number(s) where they can be reached and phone the facts to them as soon as possible.
5. **BEFORE RELEASING NAMES OF PERSONS INJURED OR DECEASED DUE TO THE INCIDENT MAKE SURE NEXT OF KIN HAS BEEN NOTIFIED.** Notifications are usually handled by police and/or hospitals. Ask the Alarm Room supervisor to check with P.D. or hospital to confirm that next of kin has been notified. **DO NOT USE THE NAMES OF DECEASED OR INJURED PERSONS OVER RADIO UNTIL NOTIFICATION OF NEXT OF KIN HAS BEEN CONFIRMED.**

The individual or company assigned to this position may be required to escort media on an orientation tour of the fire-damaged area, following knockdown. This must be cleared with Command and coordinated with operating sectors before entering the area.

Salt River Fire Department Operating Guidelines

Public Information Officer

April 2000

201.04B

3 of 3



The Public Information Officer will be responsible for requiring that all media personnel wear proper protective clothing on the fireground, when needed.

Each Group or Division Officer is responsible for the safety of media personnel in the area. If media personnel create a safety problem, or hinder operations, they should be requested to move in a positive manner – **AVOIDING CONFRONTATIONS**.

The policy of the Department is to cooperate with the media.

The PIO will have access to the Media Line, which contacts all news agencies on a closed-loop telephone system.

The following guidelines will describe the information that is normally requested or provided.

1. Reporters are interested in the number of units that responded to the incident, not necessarily their unit designation. They are also interested in total personnel figures.
Example: 4 Engines + 2 Ladders + 1 BC = 7 units and 23 firefighters
2. They will also want to know how long it took the Department to get on the scene, and how long it took to control the situation. Volunteer the other information if it is not asked for.
3. Tell what the first unit on the scene encountered and the action taken. Example: Engine 291 arrived on the scene and the house was well involved. E-291 officer ordered a quick attack with 1 3/4" lines and ordered Truck 291 to "search and rescue" and to "secure the utilities". Truck 291 removed 1 victim who was treated at the scene by Rescue 292.
Interviews with first in Captains are encouraged.
4. In the event of injuries, fire or civilian, list the full name, date of birth, extent of injuries and where taken for treatment. In case of fatality - omit extent of injury. Do not release this information until next of kin is notified.
5. Note specific hazards encountered, (i.e., toxic materials, flammable liquids, etc.) and/or special accomplishments (i.e., rescues, good salvage work, etc.). Also note points about "built-in fire protection" (i.e., fire was stopped by sprinkler system, a smoke detector may have possibly prevented this fatality, etc.).
6. Use investigator figures for dollar loss estimate. If figure is not available, use a word assessment (i.e., heavy, moderate, etc.)